



Connected Learning in a Time of Confinement

Week 9: Technology and Agency

June 1, 2020

This anthology has been prepared in draft form for use in a special seminar curriculum and are provided for private, non-commercial use in extraordinary times. Additional information about the seminar and this volume is available from The Aspen Institute, 2300 N Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20037.

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Other resources,

including daily meditations, periodic podcasts, on-line seminars and discussions, and occasional on-line conversations about this week's curriculum, are available at:

aspeninstitute.org/programs/executive-leadership-development/resources-for-living-and-leading/

How to Use this Curriculum

Connected Learning in Times of Confinement is designed to support people and their families, neighborhoods, organizations, and networks by building upon the Aspen Institute's unique expertise in facilitating meaningful conversations in a seminar setting.

We envisage a weekly curriculum that can be used in pieces, or all at once, or in various combinations. Our hope is that these readings and guidance will allow you and others to reflect on fundamental human questions in ways that nourish our hearts, minds, and fellowship in a time of confinement. A curriculum (from the Latin *currere*, to run) is a path, an exploration, not something to be mastered but an invitation to discovery and wonder. These materials are curated to intrigue and delight you, and we invite you to reflect upon them on your own, and to share them—with family, friends, neighbors, teams, networks. In this, the journey itself is the destination, a call to thought, dialogue, and action.

In a journey it is often helpful to have a guide, and in this curriculum you will find three guides:

First, the authors themselves—

we do not need to follow the authors, but we do well to understand what they are saying;

Second, guiding questions—

for each reading, there is a set of guiding questions designed for individual and collective reflection; they are not the only (or even most important) questions, but a way of getting started; these may be found at the back of the packet and are best read after you have read the texts;

Third, general guidance—

for each discussion, participants and discussion leaders may want to remind themselves of some best practices; these may be found at the back of this packet.

We invite you to share these readings widely and encourage others to engage in conversation. As you do so, know that fellow seminar graduates and their families, friends, and colleagues are doing the same. We all contribute to a global chorus of conversation about ideas worth sharing and acting upon.

**—Todd Breyfogle, PhD
Managing Director, Aspen
Executive Leadership Seminars**

About Aspen Institute Seminars

The Aspen Institute Executive Leadership Seminars Department drives change through reflection, dialogue, and action in service of a more free, just, and equitable society. We do this by: curating brave spaces of shared meaning which help people become more self-aware, more self-correcting, and more self-fulfilling; deepening participants' humane sensibilities and capacities for moral judgment through an examination of the humanistic traditions; establishing meaningful connections among diverse people and organizations in service of a better society.

For more information, including information about customized programs for companies and other organizations, please contact Kalissa Hendrickson, PhD, Director, at Kalissa.Hendrickson@aspennst.org or 202-736-3586. [Learn more.](#)

Philosophical Basis

The Aspen Institute starts from an act of faith in the humanistic tradition: one must be reflective in order to insure that all human activity – political, scientific, economic, intellectual or artistic – will serve the needs of human beings and enrich and deepen their lives.

The Institute believes in the value both of the “Great Ideas” of the past as well as the importance of the sometimes inelegant and highly controversial ideas of the present.

The Institute is dedicated to the fundamental educational value of dialogue for mature men and women from different nations and cultures -- intercommunications between people of comparable competence from various backgrounds and specialized fields of experience.

The Aspen idea recognizes that the processes by which persons learn and develop or change their ideas are not mechanical or even purely rational. As there is a mystery at the edge of human thought, so there is a magic about human relationships, and the magic we attempt to invoke in Aspen is that of the sheer beauty of this area of the Rocky Mountains.

With Erasmus, we hold that “nothing human is alien” to the inquiring purposes of the Aspen Institute. The Institute intends to be, in sum, a place of excellence and excitement where men and women of the finest qualities of mind and spirit from all walks of life in the United States and abroad can meet to learn from one another through serious discussion of and work on significant problems facing society and the greatest ideas which have been expressed throughout history and today concerning these problems.

—J. E. Slater, President, The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1972

**Connected Learning in
a Time of Confinement**

Readings | Week 9

- 5 Sayyid Amir Ali, "Responsibility and Free Will"
- 9 Walter Benjamin, "To the Planetarium"
- 11 Harriet Martineau, "Progress"
- 15 Ladan Osman, "Western Gate"

Responsibility and Free Will

by Sayyid Amir Ali
(1849–1928)

1 Like all other nations of antiquity, the pre-Islamite Arabs were stern fatalists. The remains of their ancient poetry, sole record of old Arab thought and manners, show that before the promulgation of Islam the people of the Peninsula had absolutely abandoned themselves to the idea of an irresistible and blind fatality. 5 Man was but a sport in the hands of Fate. This idea bred a reckless contempt of death, and an utter disregard for human life. The teachings of Islam created a revolution in the Arab mind; with the recognition of a supreme Intelligence governing the universe, they received the conception of self-dependence and of moral responsibility founded on the liberty of human volition. One of 10 the remarkable characteristics of the Koran is the curious, and, at first sight, inconsistent, manner in which it combines the existence of a Divine Will, which not only orders all things, but which acts directly upon men and addresses itself to the springs of thought in them, with the assertion of a free agency in man and of the liberty of intellect. Not that this feature is peculiar to the Moslem scripture; 15 the same characteristic is to be found in the Biblical records. But in the Koran the conception of human responsibility is so strongly developed that the question naturally occurs to the mind, How can these two ideas be reconciled with each other? It seems inconsistent at first sight that man should be judged by his works, a doctrine which forms the foundation of Islamic morality, if all his actions are 20 ruled by an all-powerful Will....

The passages, however, in which human responsibility and the freedom of human will are laid down in emphatic terms define and limit the conception of absolutism. "And whosoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility;...and let alone those who make a sport and a mockery of their 25 religion, and whom this present world has deluded, and thereby bring to remembrance that any soul perishes for what it has got to itself; and when they commit a deed of shame they say: We have found that our fathers did so, and God obliges us to do it; say thou: Surely, God requireth not shameful doing:... they did injustice to themselves; yonder will every soul experience that which it 30 hath bargained for;...so then, whosoever goes astray, he himself bears the whole responsibility of wandering."

Man, within the limited sphere of his existence, is absolute master of his conduct. He is responsible for his actions, and for the use or misuse of the powers

From Sayyid Amir Ali, *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islam* (Christophers, 1922) pp. 403-404, 406-409. The phrase "[had they lived to maturity]" appears in the original text; the phrase "{passages from the Quran}" was added for clarity.

1 with which he has been endowed. He may fall or rise, according to his own
"inclination." There was supreme assistance for him who sought Divine help and
guidance. Is not the soul purer and better in calling to its Lord for that help which
He has promised? Are not the weak strengthened, the stricken comforted— by
5 their own appeal to the Heavenly Father for solace and strength? ...I shall refer
only to a few {passages in the Quran} to explain what I have already indicated, that
in Mohammed's mind an earnest belief in the liberty of human will was joined to
a vivid trust in the personality of the heavenly Father. Hereditary depravity and
natural sinfulness were emphatically denied. Every child of man was born pure
10 and true; every departure in after-life from the path of truth and rectitude is due to
education. "Every man is born religiously constituted; it is his parents who make
him afterwards a Jew, Christian, or a Sabaeen, like as ye take up the beast at its
birth — do ye find upon it any mutilation, until ye yourselves mutilate it?" Infants
have no positive moral character: for about those who die in early life, "God best
15 knows what would have been their conduct" [had they lived to maturity]. "Every
human being has two inclinations,— one prompting him to good and impelling
him thereto, and the other prompting him to evil and thereto impelling him; but
the godly assistance is nigh, and he who asks the help of God in contending with
the evil promptings of his own heart obtains it." "It is your own conduct which
20 will lead you to paradise or hell, as if you had been destined there for." No man's
conduct is the outcome of fatality, nor is he borne along by an irresistible decree to
heaven or hell; on the contrary, the ultimate result is the creation of his own actions,
for each individual is primarily answerable for his future destiny. "Every moral
agent is furthered to his own conduct," or, as it is put in another tradition: "Every
25 one is divinely furthered in accordance with his character." Human conduct is by
no means fortuitous; one act is the result of another; and life, destiny and character
mean the connected series of incidents and actions which are related to each other,
as cause and effect, by an ordained law, "the assignment" of God. In the sermons
of the Disciple we find the doctrine more fully developed. "Weigh your own soul
30 before the time for the weighing of your actions arrives; take count with yourself
before you are called upon to account for your conduct in this existence; apply
yourself to good and pure actions, adhere to the path of truth and rectitude before
the soul is pressed to leave its earthly abode: verily, if you will not guide and warn
yourself, none other can direct you." "I adjure you to worship the Lord in purity
and holiness. He has pointed out to you the path of salvation and the temptations
35 of this world. Abstain from foulness, though it may be fair-seeming to your sight;
avoid evil, however pleasant. . . . For ye knoweth how far it takes you away from
Him. . . . Listen, and take warning by the words of the Merciful Guardian". . .
And again, "O ye servants of my Lord, fulfil the duties that are imposed on you, for
in their neglect is abasement: your good works alone will render easy the road to
40 death. Remember, each sin increases the debt, and makes the chain [which binds
you] heavier. The message of mercy has come; the path of truth is clear ; obey the

1 command that has been laid on you ; live in purity, and work in piety, and ask God
to help you in your endeavours, and to forgive your past transgressions.”“Cultivate
humility and forbearance: comport yourself with piety and truth. Take count of
your actions with your own conscience (*nafs*) for he who takes such count reaps a
5 great reward, and he who neglects incurs great loss. He who acts with piety gives
rest to his soul; he who takes warning understands the truth; he who understands
it attains the perfect knowledge.” These utterances convey no impression of pre-
destinarianism; on the contrary, they portray a soul animated with a living faith
in God, and yet full of trust in human development founded upon individual
10 exertion springing from human volition. Mohammed’s definition of reason and
knowledge, of the cognition of the finite and infinite, reminds us of Aristotelian
phraseology and thought, and Ali’s address to his son may be read with advantage
by the admirer of Aristotelian ethics.

Notes

Connected Learning in
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To the Planetarium

by Walter Benjamin
(1892–1940)

1 If one had to expound the teachings of antiquity with utmost brevity while
standing on one leg, as did Hillel that of the Jews, it could only be in this sentence:
“They alone shall possess earth who live from the powers of the cosmos.” Nothing
distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the farmer’s absorption
5 in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods. Its waning is marked by the
flowering of astronomy at the beginning of the modern age. Kepler, Copernicus,
and Tycho Brahe were certainly not driven by scientific impulses alone. All the
same, the exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe, to which
astronomy very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancients’
10 intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance [*Rausch*]. For it
is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us
and what is remotest from us, and never of one without the other. This means,
however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It
is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and
15 avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights.
It is not; its hour strikes again and again, and then neither nations nor generations
can escape it, as was made terribly clear by the last war, which was an attempt at
new and unprecedented commingling with the cosmic powers. Human multitudes,
gases, electrical forces were hurled into the open country, high-frequency currents
20 coursed through the landscape, new constellations rose in the sky, aerial space and
ocean depths thundered with propellers, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were
dug in Mother Earth. This immense wooing of the cosmos was enacted for the
first time on a planetary scale—that is, in the spirit of technology. But because
the lust for profit of the ruling class sought satisfaction through it, technology
25 betrayed man and turned the bridal bed into a bloodbath. The mastery of nature
(so the imperialists teach) is the purpose of all technology. But who would trust a
cane wielder who proclaimed the mastery of children by adults to be the purpose
of education? Is not education, above all, the indispensable ordering of the
relationship between generations and therefore mastery (if we are to use this term)
30 of that relationship and not of children? And likewise technology is the mastery
of not nature but of the relation between nature and man. Men as a species com-
pleted their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just

From Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin; selection translated by Edmund Jephcott. (Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 58-60.

1 beginning his. In technology, a *physis* is being organized through which man-
kind's contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it
had in nations and families. One need recall only the experience of velocities by
virtue of which mankind is now preparing to embark on incalculable journeys
5 into the interior of time, to encounter there rhythms from which the sick
shall draw strength as they did earlier on high mountains or on the shores of
southern seas. The "Lunaparks" are a prefiguration of sanatoria. The paroxysm
of genuine cosmic experience is not tied to that tiny fragment of nature that we are
accustomed to call "Nature." In the nights of annihilation of the last war, the frame
10 of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And
the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body
under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence.
If it is not gripped to the very marrow by the discipline of this power, no pacifist
polemics will save it. Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in
15 the ecstasy of procreation.

Progress

by Harriet Martineau
(1802–1876)

1 Useful arts and inventions spread so rapidly in these days of improving
communication, that they are no longer the decisive marks of enlightenment in
a people that they were when each nation had the benefit of its own discoveries,
and little more. Yet it is worthy of remark what kinds of improvement are the most
generally adopted; whether those which enhance the luxury of the rich, or such
5 as benefit the whole society. It is worthy of remark whether the newest delight is
in splendid club-houses, where gentlemen may command the rarest luxuries at a
smaller expense than would have been possible without the aid of the principle of
economy of association, or in the groups of mechanics' dwellings, where the same
principle is applied in France to furnishing numbers with advantages of warmth,
10 light, cookery, and cleanliness, which they could no otherwise have enjoyed.
It is worth observing whether there are most mechanical inventions dedicated
to the selfishness of the rich, or committed to the custom of the working classes. If
the rich compose the great body of purchasers who are to be considered by
inventors, the working classes are probably depressed. If there are most purchasers
15 among the most numerous classes, the working order is rising, and the state of
things is hopeful.—How speed the great discoveries and achievements which
cannot, by any management, be confined to the few? How prospers the steam-engine,
the rail-road,—strong hands which cannot be held back, by which a multitude of
the comforts of life are extended to the poor, who could not reach up to them
20 before? Do men glory most in the activity of these, or in the invention of a new
pleasure for the satiated?

In the finer arts, for whom are heads and hands employed? The study of the
ruins of all old countries tells the antiquary of the lives of the rich alone. There
are churches which record the living piety or the dying penitence of the rich;
25 priories and convents which speak of monkish idleness, and the gross luxuries
which have cloaked themselves in asceticism; there are palaces of kings, castles of
nobles, and villas of opulent commoners; but nowhere, except in countries recently
desolated by war, are the relics of the abodes of the poor the study of the traveller.
If he now finds skill bestowed on the buildings which are the exclusive resort of
30 the labouring classes, and taste employed in their embellishment, it is clear that

From Harriet Martineau, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (Charles Knight, 1838) pp. 70-71.

1 the order is rising. The record of each upward heave will remain for the obser-
2 vation of the future traveller, in the buildings to which they resort;—a record as
3 indisputable as a mountain fissure presents to the geologist.

4 Time was when the dwellings of the opulent were ornamented with costly and
5 beautiful works of art, while the eye of the peasant and the artisan found no other
6 beauty to rest on than the face of his beloved, and the forms of his children. At this
7 day, there are countries in Europe where the working man aspires to nothing more
8 than to stick up an image of the Virgin, gay with coloured paper, in a corner of
9 his dwelling. But there are other lands where a higher taste for beauty is gratified.
10 There are good prints provided cheap, to hang in the place of the ancient sampler
11 or daub. Casts from all the finest works of the statuary, ancient and modern, are
12 hawked about the streets, and may be seen in the windows where green parrots
13 and brown cats in plaster used to annoy the eye. In societies where the working
14 class is thus worked for, in the gratification of its finer tastes, the class must be
15 rising. It is rising into the region of intellectual luxury, and must have been borne
16 up thither by the expansion of the fraternal spirit.

17 The great means of progress, for individuals, for nations, and for the race at
18 large, is the multiplication of Objects of interest. The indulgence of the passions is
19 the characteristic of men and societies who have but one occupation and a single
20 interest; while the passions cause comparatively little trouble where the intel-
21 lect is active, and the life diversified with objects. Pride takes a safe direction,
22 jealousy is diverted from its purposes of revenge, and anger combats with
23 circumstances, instead of with human foes. The need of mutual aid, the habit of co-
24 operation caused by interest in social objects, has a good effect upon men's feelings
25 and manners towards each other; and out of this grows the mutual regard which
26 naturally strengthens into the fraternal spirit. The Russian boor, imprisoned in his
27 serfhood, cannot comprehend what it is to care for any but the few individuals
28 who are before his eyes, and the Grand Lama has probably no great sympathy with
29 the race; but in a town within whose compass almost all occupations are going
30 forward, and where each feels more or less interest in what engages his neighbour,
31 nothing of importance to the race can become known without producing more
32 or less emotion. A famine in India, an earthquake in Syria, causes sorrow. The
33 inhabitants meet to petition against the wrongs inflicted on people whom they have
34 never seen, and give of the fruits of their labour to sufferers who have never heard
35 of them, and from whom they can receive no return of acknowledgment. It is found
36 that the more pursuits and aims are multiplied, the more does the appreciation of
37 human happiness expand, till it becomes the interest which predominates over
38 all the rest. This is an interest which works out its own gratification, more surely
39 than any other. Wherever, therefore, the greatest variety of pursuits is met with,
40 it is fair to conclude that the fraternal spirit of society is the most vigorous, and the
41 society itself the most progressive. This is as far as any nation has as yet attained,—

- 1 to a warmer than common sympathy among its own members, and compassion for distant sufferers. When the time comes for nations to care for one another, and co-operate as individuals, such a people will be the first to hold out the right hand.

Notes

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Western Gate

by Ladan Osman

1 They say women's dreams stay indoors.
These days I dream an ocean under the bed.
I wake up and watch its tide.
I'm myself but also a large black bird,
5 like the crows near oceans.
I sit up in bed. I perch on the concrete sill.
I'm big enough to slap pavement upon impact,
take running steps to land.
I shout for myself to fly
10 but only look back at myself
and the water rises
so the whole room smells like salted water
and soaked beans. Have you ever tried to walk
when the water recedes, leaving a chainmail pattern
15 in the sand, feet sinking? Have you ever
tried to walk watching the water move
and fallen right into it?
The sinking woman will try to make waves
a column, its froth a steady handhold.
20 I've been having a problem with my eyes.
I keep thinking they'll get paper cuts.
I squint and reveal floaters on every surface.
I could never see past what's right in front of me,
and dislike the whole house if it has broken blinds.
25 I can't ignore the shapes floating past my retina.
I can't submit. I align them for inspection,
the runs in my humor: Clogged Pipe, Jellyfish, the Titanic.
They grow with each pass.
"Look beyond them," my father would say
30 when he'd catch me squinting into light, the other eye wide
and rolling, flicking madly to catch any figure.
One night, a black spider in my pillowcase.
"God sent me here to protect you."
"Okay," I said. "Come on in."

From Ladan Osman, *The Kitchen-Dweller's Testimony* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015), pp. 82-84.

1 "Who are you talking to?" my husband asked.
I told him a spider with the most beautiful voice
would be sleeping with us from now on.
From time to time, I would see her outside,
5 dangling at the window, her large abdomen
gleaning. At dusk, a katydid at ear-level,
trilling like a transformer. Every sunset,
pray, pray, pray in currents that grate my heart.
But I can't always do it. I hide from it,
10 from the windows.
Is there a shadow in the dust?
Is there some depression in the dust?
someone please track the visitant
whose entrance implies a new dimension.
15 It's as odd as a cat standing before you,
watching you pray. Claws at your forehead.
Pouring skin-temperature water over yourself,
wondering, have I dressed in unseen garments?
Or scripture playing to an empty room.
20 How long will my second self
jump up and go to the first exit?
After a season of night terrors—
leaves, feathers, lapping water,
men with lights, then torsos of light,
25 a large bird appeared on the sill.
It was bigger than all the others.
"What do you want?
Should I die so you can
take this bed?"
30 It looked sad and faced westwards,
eyes jaundiced. So I sat up,
and told it to leave, leave.
I flapped my wrists.
It turned from me, facing west.
35 A breeze lifted a collar of feathers.
I was again it, myself.
By then I was ready to go crazy,
lay my head on the bottom of a tub
filled with my crazy.
40 And then it flew away
and the torsos and ocean went with it,
and I was myself, again
and peaceful with my three shadows
when walking in any new night.

Image of the Week



Alfred Eisenstaedt, *Untitled (Brooklyn Bridge #9)*, 1983

Notes

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Guiding Questions

The best questions arise from careful listening (to the author, oneself, and others), and from the spontaneity of wonder

Sayyid Amir Ali, "Responsibility and Free Will"

- What is the paradox Amir Ali is trying to address?
- Does moral agency make any sense in the absence of free will?
- To what extent is a person "absolute master of his conduct"?
- What tools or external resources are available to us in becoming better people?
- What is character? What responsibility do we bear for the character we have?

Walter Benjamin, "To the Planetarium"

- "They alone shall possess the earth who live from the powers of the cosmos." How does this capture, for Benjamin, the contrast between the ancient and the modern conception of what it means to be human?
- How does Benjamin define technology as it is commonly understood? How does he want to redefine technology? Which definition do you prefer? Why?
- Where does Benjamin locate power or agency?
- Does technology change our relationship to nature? To others? To ourselves?

Harriet Martineau, "Progress"

- Do "improvements" primarily benefit the rich or the whole of society?
- What is Martineau's assessment of changes in how beauty is appreciated and consumed?
- What does "progress" seem to mean in this text?
- Does progress in "improvements" and "objects of interest" increase or diminish moral agency?

Ladan Osman, "Western Gate"

- Read the poem aloud: What words, images, and/or feelings does the poem evoke in you?
- What does the poem suggest about agency?
- What is the essence of the dream?
- What internal and external tools allow the narrative voice to become "myself, again"?
- What are "the three shadows"?

Alfred Eisenstaedt, *Untitled (Brooklyn Bridge #9)*, 1983

- Set a timer and look at the image for 3 minutes: What do you see? What feelings does the image evoke?
- How would each of our authors comment on the photo's expression of technology and agency?
- Does the bridge connect or separate? Is it harmonious with nature or does it dominate nature?
- The photograph is a technological reproduction of a technological artefact itself the product of human agency. In what ways does photographic technology connect us to or separate us from the artefact itself and the human agency that produced it?

General questions for the week

- Does technological progress make us more or less human? More or less equal? Give us more or less agency?
- How do our tools enhance or diminish our relationships, including our relationship with the divine, or something greater than ourselves (however you conceive that)?
- Are technology and agency ever completely neutral?

Short Guide to Leading a Discussion

General Principles for Participants

- Read the text(s) to be discussed in their entirety (ideally twice)
- Make notes about what you understand, don't understand, agree or disagree with
- Focus comments and conversation on the ideas expressed in the shared text(s), not on outside
- knowledge
- Seek to understand your fellow participants, not to persuade them
- Be freely authentic and morally present
- Listen to the text, to others, and to yourself

General principles for discussion leaders:

- Hold the space for honesty and vulnerability: be honest and vulnerable yourself
- Ask questions, don't teach: the aim is shared understanding and meaning, not agreement
- Be attached to the conversation: avoid rigidly following your planned order of questions
- Make sure every voice is heard: don't move too quickly to fill the silence
- Start and end on time: end not with conclusions but with questions you're taking away

Format:

- Match the texts to the time allotted (*Each text can productively stimulate 20-40 minutes of discussion, and can be read discussed individually or together in one sitting, depending on the time available; it is better to end with more to be said, rather than straining to fill the time*)
- Begin with introductions:
 - name (if not everyone is well known to one another)

- what is on your heart and mind?
- the person speaking chooses the next person
- Set the frame:
 - remind participants to enjoy the gift of time and conversation by avoiding other
 - distractions
 - revisit the key general principles above
- It always helps to read a passage aloud
- Layer your questions: be patient, each layer builds upon the next
 - What does the text say? (sometimes we read the same thing different ways)
 - What does the text mean? (sometimes we interpret the text differently)
 - What does the text mean to me? (sometimes we apply the texts to ourselves differently)
 - What does the text mean for us? (we may have different understandings of what the text means for living in community)
 - What does the text mean for society? (we may have different approaches to what the text implies for action in society)

Some helpful tips to keep the conversation going (for discussion leaders and participants):

- "say more about that"
- "where do you see that in the text?"
- "how is that related to what N said earlier?"
- "do you think that's true?"
- "do others see it the same way?"
- "what did you see in the text that we haven't addressed?"

Notes

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